



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO Department of Agriculture/Measurement Standards

2156 SIERRA WAY, SUITE A, SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93401-4556
ROBERT F. LILLEY (805) 781-5910
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER/SEALER FAX: (805) 781-1035

AgCommSLO@co.slo.ca.us

AG TOURISM – DIRECT MARKETING STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OVERVIEW

APRIL 2006

Purpose of Project:

This project seeks to continue the implementation of Ag Policy 6: *Visitor Serving and Retail Commercial Use and Facilities* and Ag Policy 31: *Recreational Use of Agricultural Lands* of the Ag and Open Space Element of the County General Plan. This will be accomplished by preparing recommendations for amendments and revisions to the existing Inland Land Use Ordinance (Title 22) as needed.

Ag Policy 6 recognizes the increasing need of farmers and ranchers to diversify on-site activities from production through the marketing of their agricultural products. Ag Policy 31 recognizes the County General Plan has encouraged owners of rural properties to establish recreational opportunities on their land where feasible and compatible with the agricultural and rural setting. This policy also recognizes that recreational uses can be an important part of the rural setting and should be developed so they are compatible with agricultural and environmental resources. Most agtourism and direct marketing related activities fall within these two policies. The Workgroup has developed a working definition of agtourism as “a farming or ranching operation that directly markets products and experiences derived primarily from local agricultural operations and that supplements the agricultural use of the site”.

Finding the balance between the promotion of appropriate economic development opportunities for agricultural operations and the desire to preserve the rural character of the community is the biggest challenge of this project. Ideally, recommended amendments and revisions will provide ways to promote agtourism opportunities that require the lowest level of permitting for the greatest number of sites and have the least impact to neighbors and neighborhoods (including neighboring ag operations).

Workgroup Core Values:

The Workgroup has developed the following shared values to help steer this project:

- Preserve agricultural land
- Preserve rural character of the agricultural areas
- Develop standards that are consistent and can be evenly enforced
- Permit activities that produce extra income but are compatible on agricultural and rural lands

Workgroup and Committees Create Proposed Amendments and Revisions:

A Workgroup, facilitated by the County Department of Agriculture and the County Planning and Building Department, was convened in November 2005. This is a group of approximately twenty-five volunteers representing diverse county agricultural commodity groups and organizations, community and citizen groups and interested citizens. Members and their alternates include: Angela Thompson, Anne McMahan, Charlie Whitney, Colleen Childers, Deanne Gonzales, Debra Garrison, Doug Filipponi, Duane Waddell, Elizabeth Roth, Holly Sletteland, Joy Barlogio, Karen Mansfield, Kim Pasciuto, Lora Pankey Eade, Mary Bianchi, Maryann Vasconcellos, Jamie Kirk, Roy Parsons, Steve Sinton, Sandra Wallace, Steve Knudson, Kate Loftus, Alison Denlinger, Eric Michielssen, and Rachel Dumas.

Eight Committees consisting of Workgroup members were established in January, 2006. The Committees are responsible for making recommendations for proposed amendments and revisions to the existing Inland Land Use Ordinance. The Committees were assigned the following topics:

- Ag Products – production of value added products
- Sale of Ag Commodities and Products
- Lodging: Recreation – camping and hunting clubs
- Lodging: dude ranches; health resorts
- Lodging: farmstays
- Lodging: B and B; inns
- Activities: temporary and special event
- Signage

Committee work is currently underway. The Committees have taken a collaborative, consensus building approach to evaluate existing standards. They are considering options from other places throughout the United States, seeking input from the constituents they represent and using local resources available such as subject matter experts from other agencies or industries to craft their recommendations.

Timeline for Completion:

Committee work will continue through 2006. Ongoing review and evaluation of all drafts by County staff, updates to the ag industry and the public and presentations to the Ag Liaison Board will continue through the winter of 2006. Portions of the recommendations, as required, will be prepared for Environmental Review in 2007, followed by Planning Commission and Board of Supervisor's review and approval.

For More Information:

Workgroup meeting announcements, meeting minutes, draft recommendations from the Committees and other information about agrotourism is posted and updated on our Department's website at www.sloag.org.

For more information about this project contact Brenda W. Ouwerkerk, County Department of Agriculture at 805-781-1556.